CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. A method comprising:

starting a computer system comprising at least one component;

determining whether the at least one component has been tested;

if not, testing the at least one component, and

otherwise, not testing the at least one component.

2. The method recited in claim 1 and further comprising, if the at least one component is tested:

storing an indication that the at least one component has been tested.

3. The method recited in claim 2, wherein the indication comprises a predetermined bit pattern.

4. The method recited in claim 3 wherein determining further comprises checking for the predetermined bit pattern.

5. The method recited in claim 4 and further comprising, if such predetermined bit pattern is present:

booting the computer system.

6. The method recited in claim 4 and further comprising, if such predetermined bit pattern is present:

determining whether a field test is ordered, and

if so, testing the at least one component, and

otherwise, booting the computer system.

7. The method recited in claim 6 and further comprising, after testing:
determining whether the test was successful; and
if so, providing an indication that the at least one component has been tested, and
otherwise, providing an error indication.

8. The method recited in claim 2 and further comprising after storing:
restarting the computer system.

9. The method recited in claim 1 and further comprising, if the at least one component is tested:
determining whether the test was successful, and
if so, storing an indication that the at least one component has been tested, and
otherwise, providing an error indication.

10. The method recited in claim 1 and further comprising, if the at least one component is not tested:
booting the computer system.

11. The method recited in claim 10, wherein booting comprises:
initializing the at least one component; and
loading a portion of an operating system into memory.

12. The method recited in claim 1 wherein determining further comprises checking for the presence of a test to test the at least one component.

13. The method recited in claim 12 and further comprising, if such a test is not present:
booting the computer system.

14. The method recited in claim 12 wherein checking comprises checking for the presence of a predetermined bit pattern.

15. A computing device having at least one component and executing a computer program comprising the operations of:

upon receiving a command to start the computing device, determining whether the at least one component has been tested; and

if not, testing the at least one component, and

otherwise, not testing the at least one component.

16. The computing device recited in claim 15 wherein the computer program further comprises the operation of:

if the at least one component is tested, storing an indication that the at least one component has been tested.

17. The computing device recited in claim 16 wherein the computer program further comprises the operation of:

after storing, restarting the computing device.

18. The computing device recited in claim 15 wherein the computer program further comprises the operation of:

if the at least one component is tested, determining whether the test was successful; and

if so, storing an indication that the at least one component has been tested, and

otherwise, providing an error indication.

19. The computing device recited in claim 15 wherein the computer program further comprises the operation of:

if the at least one component is not tested, booting the computing device.

20. The computing device recited in claim 19 wherein, in booting, the at least one component is initialized, and a portion of an operating system is loaded into memory.

21. The computing device recited in claim 15 wherein, in determining, a check is made for the presence of a test to test the at least one component.

22. The computing device recited in claim 21 wherein the computer program further comprises the operation of:

if such a test is not present, booting the computing device.

23. The computing device recited in claim 21 wherein, in checking, a check is made for the presence of a predetermined bit pattern.

24. An article comprising a machine-accessible medium having associated instructions, wherein the instructions, when accessed, result in a machine comprising at least one component performing:

upon receiving a command to start the machine, determining whether the at least one component has been tested;

if not, testing the at least one component, and

otherwise, not testing the at least one component.

25. The article of claim 24 wherein the instructions, when accessed, additionally result in the machine performing:

if the at least one component is tested, storing an indication that the at least one component has been tested.

26. The article of claim 25 wherein the instructions, when accessed, additionally result in the machine performing:

after storing, restarting the machine.

27. The article of claim 24 wherein the instructions, when accessed, additionally result in the machine performing:

if the at least one component is tested, determining whether the test was successful; and

if so, storing an indication that the at least one component has been tested, and

otherwise, providing an error indication.

28. The article of claim 24 wherein the instructions, when accessed, additionally result in the machine performing:

if the at least one component is not tested, booting the machine.

29. The article of claim 28 wherein the instructions, when accessed, additionally result in the machine performing:

in booting, the at least one component is initialized, and a portion of an operating system is loaded into memory.

30. The article of claim 24 wherein the instructions, when accessed, additionally result in the machine performing:

in determining, a check is made for the presence of a test to test the at least one component and, if such a test is not present, booting the machine.